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# A Tripartite Framework for Disciplining Children: Integrating Ibn Miskawaih, Al-Ghazālī and Modern Psychological Thought

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**Abstract**

In contemporary context of ever-increasing concerns like mental-health and moral confusion regarding how to upbring children; it is rather becoming difficult to provide a single solution. This is probably because of globalization, rapid change in educational systems, technological and digital era; new challenges are being faced by the millennials parents and mentors that were never faced prior to Gen Z, Gen. Alpha and Gen. Beta. In spite of several ethical debates on parenting style, I believe that a single approach won't provide a feasible solution, so in this paper we are going to use tripartite framework. By integrating the rational ethics of Ibn Miskawaih, spiritual guidance of Al-Ghazālī and modern psychological theories we can develop a balanced model for disciplining children of both current and future generations. A model that respects children dignity, nurture their character; and prepares them for success in both this world and hereafter (i.e. meeting both its worldly and spiritual needs). The current paper is divided into 5 sections: (1) introduction to importance of disciplining children techniques for present and future generations in changing times; (2) and (3) shall focus on Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazālī perspectives on children upbringing; section (4) will focus on modern psychological theories to discipline children and raise them to be responsible moral individuals. Lastly, the paper will analyse contemporary relevance of tripartite model and its role in the emotional regulation of children followed by concluding remarks.

**Keywords:** child-psychology, discipline, authoritative parenting, habit formation, gentle parenting, emotional regulation

## Introduction

Owing to the malleable nature of children, the correct manner to upbring children is an important quest among theologians, ethicists, philosophers and psychologists that span across cultures and eras. It is common knowledge that the character traits acquired in childhood are very hard to change. Hence moral improvement and training of people ought to be done when they are more likely to receive it, i.e. during their childhood. Discipline doesn't only means to correct behavior; rather it's about cultivating moral character, nurturing self-control and good habits that will transform the child into a responsible adult. This paper will further take into account the traditional and modern-day challenges faced by parents and mentors to discipline their kids. The following table shall briefly discuss the timeline from Baby boomers to generation beta along with significant historical events that shape their ideologies and behavior.

**Table 1.** Attitudes and Behaviors shaped throughout various Generations[1]

| Generation and Timeline | Significant Events | Finances | Technological Advances |
|---|---|---|---|
| Baby Boomers (1945-1964) | Cold war, Post WWII optimism, and the hippie movement | Increased life expectancy so they tends to manage retirement | Major consumers of traditional media like TV, newspaper, radio etc. |
| Gen X[2] (1965-1979) | End of Cold War, started using personal computing, and feel alienating between two generations | Heavy debt load due to taking care of their parents, children studies, meeting daily expenses and trying to manage retirement funds. | Along with traditional media consumption, they also started Facebook |
| Gen Y (or millennials) (1980-1996) | The Great Recession leading to the Great Depression; technological expansion in internet and social media; and 9/11 | Extreme financial struggles so they delay in owing homes and marriages. | Media (TV with Cables and Dish, Netflix, emergence of mobile devices and laptops) |
| Gen Z (1997-2012) | Aftermath of 9/11 and wars between countries; Smartphones and social media; observing their parents financial instability | Eager to gain financial education, opening saving accounts in early ages in contrast to previous generations. | Children mobile usage (started from ages between 10-13); era of smartphones and digitalization; online banking |
| Gen A (Alpha) (2013-2024) | Global Pandemic (COVID-19), social justice movement, American politics, Brexit | Virtual Schooling via AI generated apps (Khan Academy, Prodigy, IXL, Duolingo, chat GPT); excessive banking losing sense of cash and massive usage of online e-commerce | Electric household appliances; new-borns being raised with smartphones; virtual schooling, social media accounts of infants handled by their parents |
| Gen B (Beta) (2025-2039) | Yet to see in near future | May see 22nd century | Digital and AI-natives |

[1]For more details, refer to Kasasa, "Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen a Explained," 2021 Kasasa. July 6, 2021; Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins," *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/; and Anne B. Smith, "How Do Infants and Toddlers Learn the Rules? Family Discipline and Young Children," *International Journal of Early Childhood* 36 (2): 27–41. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03168198.

[2]Gen X is also known 'Latch key' or 'MTV generation.' See Kasasa, "Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen a Explained," 2021 Kasasa. July 6, 2021. https://www.kasasa.com/exchange/articles/generations/gen-x-gen-y-gen-z.

The generation's centuries prior to baby boomers are considered traditional having a differing civilizational, cultural, religious and political setting that influenced the parental disciplining techniques. Discussing them in detail is beyond the scope of this paper. Table 1 also portrays how millennial parents are facing challenges that were novel to previous generations. So, a single-handed perspective to discipline would be insufficient in resolving current challenges. This paper will integrate traditional Islamic perspective on disciplining children (which may be an extension of Greeks especially in Ibn Miskawaih case) extracted from two eminent Islamic thinkers, Ibn Miskawaih (932-1030 AD) and Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 AD);[3] and modern western psychological perspective to comprehend how to discipline children. Western outlook for the current study is imperative because the world is incessantly being shaped and ruled by European technological advances. Moreover, their societies are far more developed as compared to the Muslim world, so it's imperative to compare and analyse the trio so that readers may understand that they have much in common with Islamic values despite being western.

## 2. Ibn Miskawaih's Narrative on Upbringing Children

Ibn Miskawaih (932-1030 AD) was an Iranian Islamic ethicist of a Persian decent. He discussed about the education and disciplining of the young (*ta'dīb al-ṣibyān*)[4] in the second chapter (*maqāla*) of his magnum opus *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*. The current section mainly deals with defining and explaining the nature of character traits (*akhlāq*) and the significance of good character traits (*al-akhlāq al-fādila*) including disciplining the children.[5] Since Ibn Miskawaih believes that the traits of a good character are developed through habituation, therefore, he considers it necessary to discipline the children while they are still building their habits.[6]

### 2.1. Developmental Stages in the Faculty of Souls

Miskawaih starts with explaining how the faculties of the soul[7] (*quwā al-nafs*) develop in a child.

i. The first faculty that develops in a child is "that by virtue of which he desires the food that keeps him alive"[8] [namely concupiscent (*al-shahawiyya*)].[9]
ii. Likewise, in accordance with his need, he develops the ability to make sounds, mainly to express whether he is feeling pleasure or pain. The expression of this may be crying or laughing.
iii. Gradually the child is inclined to develop the faculty further by providing it the things of its desire.

[3]Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Miskawaih was enumerated among "the greatest representative of philosophical ethics in Islam." See Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq* (Al-Ma'had al-'Ālī li al-'Ūlum wa al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 2016), 18; and A. H. Ansari, *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih* (The Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1964), 317, 317). While Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī is remembered as theologian and greatest mystic of Islamic tradition.

[4]Please note that the word "ṣabiyy" in the text has been translated to "child," and "youth," to fit it to its wide usage by both the author.

[5]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136-137.

[6]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 137.

[7]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 137, For Miskawaih, there are three faculties of the soul namely rational, concupiscent and irascible. Furthermore, he used "faculties" in a different sense i.e., as three powers of the soul. He asserted that "these faculties are numerous, and some are necessary for the existence of others."

[8]The translations are those of the author, with consultation of Zurayk's translation.

[9]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136.

iv. After this, he develops the capacity to move and again he utilises it to achieve the ends of the concupiscent faculty.
v. This is followed by the development of the five senses and the capacity to imagine things and the objects of desire.[10]
vi. After these developments with respect to the concupiscent faculty, the irascible faculty (*al-quwwa al-ghaḍabiyya*) of the soul starts to develop. Miskawaih connects the development of the irascible faculty to the concupiscent soul by mentioning that the former develops to defend the soul against what may harm it; and/or keep what may benefit it.[11]
vii. This is followed by the development of the rational faculty (*al-quwwa al-nāṭiqa*), when a child learns to discern between things, till it develops to the level that he is known as a rational being.

In addition, Miskawaih also reminds the reader of the ultimate aim of all human actions. Since he is talking about desires, he takes this opportunity to mention that all desires ultimately aim at the "absolute good" (*al-khair al-muṭlaq*), the desire of which makes a human truly human.[12] Among these faculties, the first that a child develops is bashfulness (*ḥayā'*) that depicts the experience of fear while committing wrong deeds.[13] Hence, says Miskawaih, the first quality that should be observed in a child and that which points to his rationality is bashfulness; for if a child shies from a bad action, it means that he is aware of the difference between right and wrong. This distinction between right and wrong is important for Miskawaih, since its discovery indicates that a child is ready to be disciplined.

### 2.2. Cultivating a Child Character

He explains that, "The soul of a child is clean, nothing having been drawn on it yet"[14] It is vital that at this point a child is neither neglected nor exposed to immoral traits because whatever is imprinted upon his soul is easily accepted by it; and becomes the child's character. Further, Miskawaih proceeds to explain ways how the soul of a child can be prevented from developing bad character traits. The foremost of these is to make the child love honor (*karāma*), especially which comes from following the religion.[15] Good people should be praised in front of him, so he desires to be like them. He should be praised for doing good deeds; and be warned of reproach if he did otherwise, even in the slightest degree. He should consume worldly goods (for e.g., food, drinks, dresses etc.) in moderation. Usually, simple clothes are preferred.[16] He should be taught to give preference to others over his own self.[17] Since "the child in the beginning of his development is, mostly, bad in all or most of his actions,"[18] he should be disciplined before these actions become a part of his character. He should be literate in both prose and poetry in order to learn good traditions and manners. However, frivolous poetry ought to be ignored as that corrupts mind of youths.[19] The reaction of the guardians to a child should not be arbitrary but with good strategy.

[10]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136.
[11]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136.
[12]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136.
[13]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 136.
[14]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 137.
[15]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 138.
[16]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,*137-138.
[17]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 138.
[18]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 138.
[19]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 138.

Miskawaih says that if a child performs a good deed, he should be praised and honored but if he does wrong, he should be, in the first instance, left without rebuke, to give him a chance to hide his mistake and not repeat it.[20] But, if he returns to the same, then he should be reproached in secrecy. This caution in reproach is so that the child does not get used to it, which shall make it inefficient and of no use.

Moreover, one of the first faculties to develop in the soul is that which makes the child seek nourishment. Accordingly, Miskawaih says that the disciplining of a child ought to begin with the manners of eating. He should be made to realise the true purpose of food i.e., nourishment and not pleasure.[21] Hence, he should intake only the amount that keeps his body sound. Among the manners of eating are also the manners of eating in company (for instance, not to start eating before others; avoid eating in haste; and to offer others the best parts of the food. Consuming food in moderation is both good for health and active mind. Understandably, he prohibits children to sit in the company of intoxicants.[22] Similarly, he should not make himself habitual of luxury and comfort and to "harden his body and habituate him to a rough life."[23] To keep him active he should be made used to "walking, movement, riding and exercise"[24] He should be taught to cover his body, walk in a decent manner. He should be humble and not boast about his parents' wealth or relatives' stature.

He should also be taught the manners of sitting among people, made habitual of telling the truth; speaking little and when necessary; and he should not swear. A child must respect his teachers and parents and remain steadfast while being guided to a right path. Along with all the disciplining it is also important that a child is allowed to play nice games, so that he has moments of relief amid all the strictness.[25]

### 2.3. Benefits of Disciplining Children

In describing the benefits of disciplining the young and teaching them good manners, Miskawaih mentions that while these manners are also beneficial to elders, they are of the maximum benefit to the young, since they make them love virtues which consequently makes it easier for them to abstain from vices as they grow up and follow what reason and *sharī'ah* demand. These manners and the character traits they develop will lead them to "the rank of high philosophy"[26] and promote them to the lofty grades of "proximity to God, vicinity of the angels and a good life in the world."[27] Were they to transcend this stage they would realise that all which human desires and actions aim at is preserving of the body's health and its moderation to prepare for the "the permanent abode and eternal life"[28] He who acts on what has been transpired, should be made habitual of exercises that keep him active and prevent him from laziness. Miskawaih gives the example of Persian kings who used to send their children to live hard lives to build their character for better kingship. Before shifting to the next topic, Miskawaih again reminds us that if

[20]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 138.
[21]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 139.
[22]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 139.
[23]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 140-141.
[24]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 141.
[25]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 142.
[26]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 143.
[27]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 143.
[28]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 143.

the young are not disciplined from an early age, it is nearly impossible to mend their ways as people who are accustomed to living as slaves to their concupiscent and irascible faculties; except a very few who are aware of their error and seek redemption.

## 3. Al-Ghazālī's Narrative on Upbringing Children

Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111 AD) was the most influential Islamic theologian and polymath. He had discussed about disciplining the young (*ta'dīb al-ṣibyān*) in book twenty two – *Kitāb Riyāḍa al-Nafs wa Tahdhīb al-Khuluq wa Mu'ālaja Amrāḍ a*l-Qalb (The Book of Disciplining the Soul, Refining the Character and Treating the Diseases of the heart) of his *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* under the subtitle "*Bayān al-Ṭarīq fī Riyāḍa al-Ṣibyān fī Awwal al-Nushū' wa Wajh Ta'dībihim wa Taḥsīn Akhlāqihim*" (An Exposition of the Way in which Children should be Trained in the earliest stage and the manner of Disciplining them and Improving their Character Traits).[29] Some insights may also be found in other chapters of the work like the section dealing with the manners of a teacher and a student in book 1. However, we will focus on the latter due to its sheer relevance to our topic. This is because much of Al-Ghazālī's narrative on children upbringing has been borrowed extensively from Miskawaih's thought.

### 3.1. Importance of Early Childhood Education

Al-Ghazāli initiates his study by highlighting the importance of the issue at hand. He argues that the training and disciplining of children is the one of the most important matters, because "a child is a trust in the care of his parents";[30] and his heart is pure and clean, and ready to accept any impressions. He can thus be inclined in any direction. As parents are keen to save their children from the sufferings of the world, so to protect them from the sufferings of the hereafter is more deserving of their attention. This can be done by disciplining a child and refining his character, by teaching him regarding moral characteristics.

### 3.2. Religious Education of a Child

Al-Ghazālī gives priority to religious education and claimed that a child should be enrolled in a *maktab*, where he can learn the Qur'ān and the traditions. Additionally, he ought to be taught stories of pious people, so that he loves them and takes them as role models. Like Ibn Miskawaih, al-Ghazālī emphasized that a child must be protected from love poetry as it "plants in the hearts of children the seeds of destruction."[31] When he reaches the age of discernment, he should not be allowed to leave obligatory prayers and cleanliness, and be made to observe the directives of *sharī'ah* to whatever degree possible. Similarly, when he starts approaching adolescence, he should be taught about meaning and wisdom of these directives; and the contrast between the temporary worldly life and permanence of the afterlife. If he had been brought up correctly, he will be able to grasp these concepts easily. A child "by his essence is created capable of both good and bad"[32] and it is his parents who lean him towards one of the sides.[33]

[29]A. H. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn* (Dār al-Minhāj, 2019); A. H. al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul*, trans., T. J. Winter (The Islamic Texts Society, 1995).

[30]The translations are those of the author, with consultation of Winter's translation. . H. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 254.

[31]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 256.

[32]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 261.

[33]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 261.

### 3.3. Cultivating a Child Character

A child should be kept away from bad company and prevented from the love for finery, luxury and adornment.[34] As soon as the child seems to show signs to discernment, he should be monitored more seriously than before. Reason in a child, develops first and foremost in the form of bashfulness (*ḥayā'*).[35] If a child shows a sign of being shy to certain actions, then this refers to a reflection "of the glowing of the light of reason" in him.[36] This is a blessing from God and shows the purity of the child's heart and the moderation of his character traits. Like Ibn Miskawaih, Ghazali claimed that at this stage the child should not be neglected; and should be taught to discipline himself using his qualities of bashfulness and discernment.[37]

The first of the qualities that a child acquires is the desire for food, so, argues al-Ghazālī, it is necessary that he is disciplined first in the manners of eating. He should be taught to eat with right hand, mention the name of God before eating, to not hasten in eating, to chew well, to not eat before others, to keep his hand; and dress clean and to sometimes eat only dry bread.[38] Likewise, gluttony should be condemned in front of him, and he should be taught to feed others before himself. Moderate consumption of dresses are preferred over adornments and luxury.[39] Moreover, a child must be prevented from the company of peers with bad influence and those with frivolous lifestyles.

A child should be admired on doing good deeds by showering them with gifts that make him happy and should be praised in front of others.[40] But if he does otherwise, it should be overlooked if he does it once; and he should be reproached in private if he repeats it. He should be warned to not repeat such actions or else people would come to know. If he remains mindful of this, it means that his heart is still inclined to good. He should also be categorically prohibited from the actions he does in secrecy; otherwise a child may become habitual of bad actions. But, parents should also be cautious to not reproach the child at every step, lest he becomes used to it. Moderation between excessive love and firm stature ought to be opted instead.[41] A life style indulged in absolute comfort should be avoided. To keep him active a child should be made to spend a part of his day in walking and exercising. He should be taught to cover his body properly and walk decently. He should be advised to be humble in front of his peers. He should be warned of the perils of loving gold and silver and getting attached to worldly wealth. And he should be taught that it is better to give something to others than taking something from them.[42] He should be trained in the manners of how to behave in company. Moreover, excessive talking and swearing should be prohibited. One of the most important principles in disciplining the young is to "prevent them from bad company"[43] A child should be taught the respect of his parents, teachers and elders.[44] Once he is

[34]Al-Ghazālī went so far as to assert that the child should be breastfed by a pious lady who consumes only *halal*. Although, this view and practice is outdated in modern times since the culture of wet-nurse has been demolished.
[35]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 254-255.
[36]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 255.
[37]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 255-256.
[38]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 255.
[39]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 256.
[40]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 256.
[41]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 257.
[42]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 256-259.
[43]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 259.
[44]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 259-260.

done with the *maktab*, he should be allowed to play, for prohibiting him from the same would "make his heart dead and intelligence diminished."[45] Al-Ghazālī ends the section with a story of Sahl al-Tustarī (818-896AD), a prominent Sufi of third Hijra century, in which al-Tustarī highlights the impact of his upbringing, in a manner similar to what has been mentioned, on the high character he possessed.

### 3.4. Similitude between Al-Ghazālī and Miskawaih's Perspective

As is already self-evident from the above two studies that there are a lot of similarities in both Al-Ghazālī and Miskawaih. To further ascertain the degree of this similarity, we compare some excerpts from the works that have an uncanny resemblance:

**Table 2.** Comparison of Miskawaih and Ghazali

| Miskawaih | Al-Ghazālī |
|---|---|
| *Fa inna nafs al-ṣabiyy sādhija lam tantaqish ba'd ṣūra*[46] | *Wa (anna) qalbahū al-ṭāhir Jauhara nafīsa sādhija*[47] |
| *Lā yubādir ilā al-ṭa'ām / lā Yuḥaddiq ilaihi Shadīda / lā Yasra'a fī al-akl*[48] | *An lā yubādir ilā al-ṭa'ām / an lā yuḥaddiq ilā al-ṭa'ām / an lā Yasra'a fī al-akl*[49] |
| *Yu'awwada al-mashya wa al-ḥaraka wa al-rukūb wa al-riyāḍa.*[50] | *Yu'awwada … al-mashya wa al-ḥaraka wa al-riyāḍa*[51] |
| *Lā yabzuq fī majlisihī wa lā yamtakhiṭu wa lā yatathā'ab bi ḥaḍra ghairihī.*[52] | *Lā yabṣiq fī majlisihī wa lā yatamakhkhaṭu wa lā yatathā'ab bi ḥaḍra ghairihī*[53] |

These similarities observed in the summaries and mentioned above prove beyond doubt that al-Ghazālī relied a lot in this section of his book on Miskawaih's thought. As previous research shows, al-Ghazālī does not shy away from borrowing from others what he agrees with.[54] But it is important to note that even after borrowing from others sometimes, al-Ghazālī still maintains his originality in so much that he adjusts it into his own grand system and modifies it accordingly. This is to say that, when he finds something comparatively agreeable in existing literature, he identifies the gap and attempts to duly fill it. While we see that he borrows from Miskawaih, we notice that he modifies it to fit into his own spiritual framework. We saw, in al-Ghazālī's exposition, where he has emphasized on the importance of disciplining children with regard to the afterlife; and that parents are answerable about it. Although Miskawaih also tries to show that his discourse is supported by religion but his thought is more inclined towards how to be an ethical being in a society; whereas al-Ghazālī shows that his discourse is essentially religious. Moreover,

[45]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 260.
[46]Since the similarities are already clear from the summaries, here we mention only the Arabic to further emphasise the point. Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 137.
[47]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 254.
[48]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 139.
[49]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 255.
[50]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 141.
[51]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 258.
[52]Miskawaih, *Tahḍīb al-Akhlāq,* 142.
[53]Ghazali, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm Al-Dīn,* 258-259.
[54]See Yasien Mohamed, "The Ethics of Education: al-Iṣfahānī's al-Dharī'a as a Source of Inspiration for al-Ghazālī's Mīzān al-'Amal," *Muslim World* 101 (4), (2011): 633-657. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1478-1913.2011.01369.X

al-Ghazālī's use of the term *qalb* (heart) rather than *nafs* (soul), also shows al-Ghazālī's departure from the Greek philosophical tradition to a more mainstream Sufi approach. At the end by mentioning the example of al-Tustarī, al-Ghazālī tried to show how benefits of an upbringing and lifestyle akin to what he had mentioned, had practically proven to be true in the case of one of the most revered Sufis of earlier times.

## 4. Upbringing Children in Accordance with Modern Western Standards

Parenting nowadays is poles apart from traditional parenting. This disparity is not just because of the time difference but enhanced rational capacities of children due to AI and digitalization. What was once considered a taboo is a prevailing norm now; what was once called a gender barrier between a mother-son and father-daughter has been replaced by frank bonding. Meek and submissive children have been replaced by children with independent thought who have started questioning authoritative nurturing. They harbor rebellious nature, freedom of expression and favors reasoning as opposed to blind following of orders.

Western child-psychology have produced theories of children development and disciplining that enumerates behaviourism of B.F. Skinner, Piaget's concept of cognitive development, Bandura's Social learning and Baumrind's parenting techniques respectively. These dynamics enable us to understand issues revolving child development, parenting and education.

### 4.1. Modern Parallels with Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazālī Perspectives on Disciplining Children

Although Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazālī's perspectives are centuries apart from western psychology regarding early childhood development and disciplining, there still exist common view points that made their perspectives still relevant.

#### 4.1.1. Habit Formation

Both thinkers believed in early childhood education as children learn from imitation; and through constant habituation they learn certain behaviors. This coincides with a Behaviorist thinker, B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), who believed that continued repetition and reinforcement can build desired behaviors.[55] Like Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazālī' development stages, Piaget believed that morality is learned gradually through stages that requires continuous practice and role models.

#### 4.1.2. Spiritual and Ethical Training

Since an individual is held accountable for his actions after resurrection in afterlife; al-Ghazālī maintained that one must cultivate piety, God consciousness, self-restraint and humility while disciplining the child. While, not religious, western psychology endorses moral responsibility, self-regulation and inner discipline. According to Erik H. Erikson's (1902-1994) psychosocial theory the early developmental stages (trust, autonomy, and initiative) emphasized on the importance of moral direction and identity.[56]

[55]Henry D. Schlinger, "Review of *The Impact of B. F. Skinner's Science of Operant Learning on Early Childhood Research, Theory, Treatment, and Care*," in *The Influence of Theorists and Pioneers on Early Childhood Education*, ed., Jacobus G. Maree (Routledge, 2022).

[56]Joan E Durrant, and R. Ensom, "An Eriksonian Perspective on Physical Punishment and Its Impacts on Mental Health," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 73 (1), (2020): 30–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/00797308.2020.1690866.

### 4.1.3. Gentle Parenting

Both Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazālī believed in gentle disciplining to a great extent as harsh treatment may leads to rebellion and humiliation; only reasoning and kindness nurture self-control. From 19th century onwards, research data shows that children whose parents use corporal punishment, yelling and expresses disappointment leads them to develop depression, aggression, fear and low self-esteem.[57] Due to this reason, Diana Baumrind (1927-2018) is against authoritative parenting. She claimed that a moderate disciplining (i.e., firm yet warm) leads to desired outcomes. Hence non-violence discipline models greatly stressed on respect, encouragement and dialogue.

### 4.1.4 Good Influences

Both Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazālī claimed that as children learn through imitation therefore everyone that surrounds a child life (be it mentors, relatives and friends) should be pious and virtuous. Moreover, al-Ghazālī asserted that it is in fact parent's responsibility to protect their children from bad influences. Albert Bandura's (1925-2021) social learning theory, similarly claims, that children learn by imitating and observing their role models.[58]

### 4.1.5 Internalization of Values

The advocacy of moderation by Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazālī resonates with the modern psychology models. Children thrive when they are being guided without suppression or overindulgence. In fact research shows that a child internalizes values based on the method and techniques used by parents, for instance a positive and rational parenting will produce positive outcomes while authoritative or negative parenting will more likely produce negative results.[59] Moreover, the very criteria of accepting or rejecting certain values depend on the kind of disciplining technique used.[60]

These common values shared by eminent Muslim thinkers and western thinkers make it more adaptable and acceptable for the adherents of Muslim societies. As both Islamic thinkers thoughts coincides and aligns with the universal principles of child psychology.

## 4.2. Contemporary Relevance of Tripartite Model on Disciplining Children

Our tripartite model for disciplining children integrates Ibn Miskawaih; al-Ghazālī and modern psychology whose relevance is discussed in the following figure.

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[57]See Elizabeth T. Gershoff, Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, Jennifer E. Lansford, Lei Chang, Arnaldo Zelli, Kirby Deater-Deckard, and Kenneth A. Dodge, "Parent Discipline Practices in an International Sample: Associations with Child Behaviors and Moderation by Perceived Normativeness," *Child Development* 81 (2), (2010): 487–502. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2009.01409.x.; K. Sobita Devi, "Parental Disciplining and Children Behaviours: A Review," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19 (2), (2014): 20–25. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19252025.

[58]See Astrid Oktaria, and Diah Karmiyati, "Delinquent Behavior: An Analysis of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory," *International Conference on Psychology and Education (ICPE)* 3 (1), (2024). https://proceeding.unesa.ac.id/index.php/icpe/article/view/3655.

[59]Joan E. Grusec, and Jacqueline J. Goodnow, "Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalization of Values: A Reconceptualization of Current Points of View," *Developmental Psychology* 30 (1), (1994): 4–19. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.30.1.4.

[60]K. Sobita Devi, "Parental Disciplining and Children Behaviours: A Review," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19 (2), (2014): 20–25. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19252025.

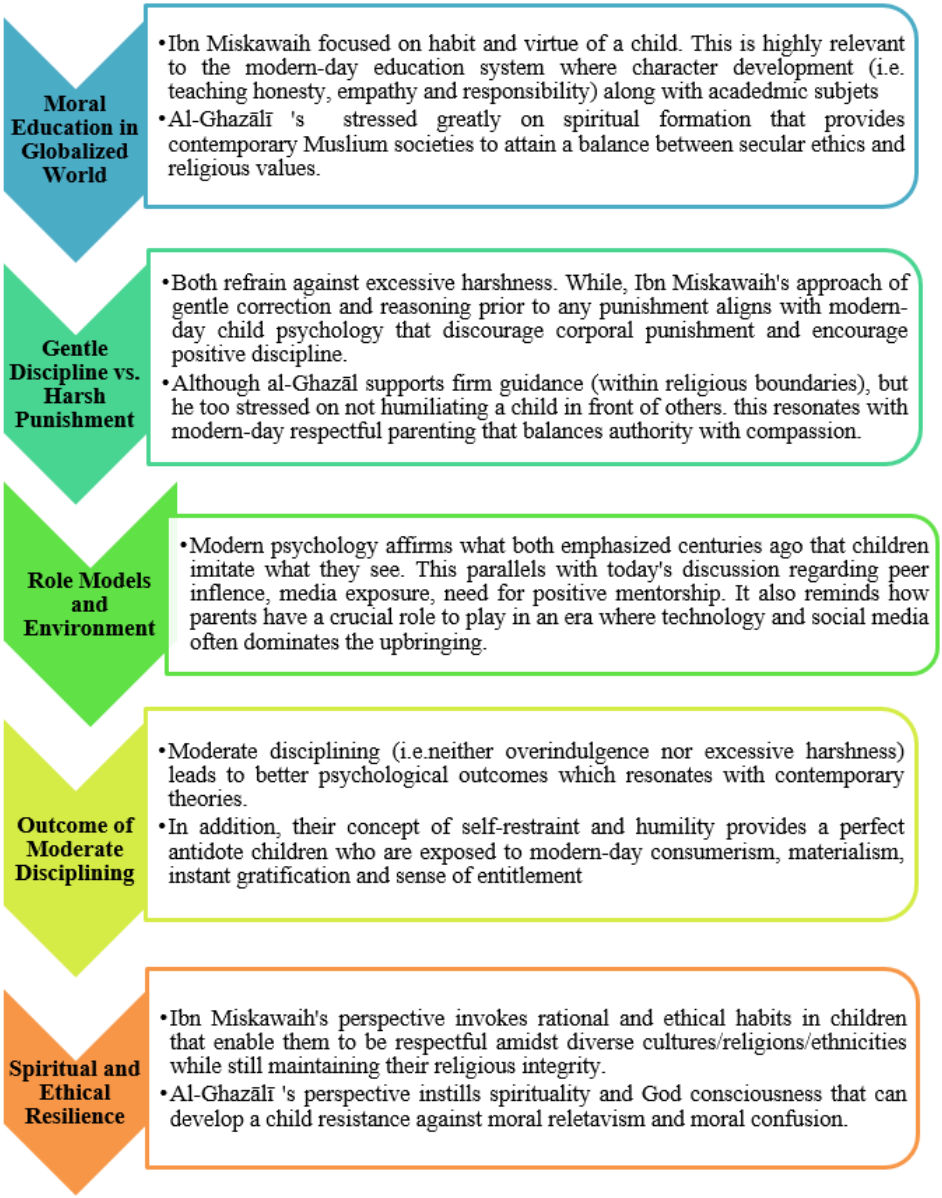
Moral Education in Globalized World
•Ibn Miskawaih focused on habit and virtue of a child. This is highly relevant to the modern-day education system where character development (i.e. teaching honesty, empathy and responsibility) along with acadedmic subjets
•Al-Ghazālī 's stressed greatly on spiritual formation that provides contemporary Muslium societies to attain a balance between secular ethics and religious values.
Gentle Discipline vs. Harsh Punishment
•Both refrain against excessive harshness. While, Ibn Miskawaih's approach of gentle correction and reasoning prior to any punishment aligns with modern-day child psychology that discourage corporal punishment and encourage positive discipline.
•Although al-Ghazāl supports firm guidance (within religious boundaries), but he too stressed on not humiliating a child in front of others. this resonates with modern-day respectful parenting that balances authority with compassion.
Role Models and Environment
•Modern psychology affirms what both emphasized centuries ago that children imitate what they see. This parallels with today's discussion regarding peer inflence, media exposure, need for positive mentorship. It also reminds how parents have a crucial role to play in an era where technology and social media often dominates the upbringing.
Outcome of Moderate Disciplining
•Moderate disciplining (i.e.neither overindulgence nor excessive harshness) leads to better psychological outcomes which resonates with contemporary theories.
•In addition, their concept of self-restraint and humility provides a perfect antidote children who are exposed to modern-day consumerism, materialism, instant gratification and sense of entitlement
Spiritual and Ethical Resilience
•Ibn Miskawaih's perspective invokes rational and ethical habits in children that enable them to be respectful amidst diverse cultures/religions/ethnicities while still maintaining their religious integrity.
•Al-Ghazālī 's perspective instills spirituality and God consciousness that can develop a child resistance against moral reletavism and moral confusion.

**Figure 1.** Contemporary Relevance of Ibn Miskawaih and Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining Children

## 5. Emotional Regulation of Children

As discussed in previous sections, parenting style directly correlates with the behavior and attitude of children when they become adults. Harsh parenting would regressively affect children and vice

versa.[61] Consider following figure as to how opposing parental techniques affects physical and emotional well-being of children.

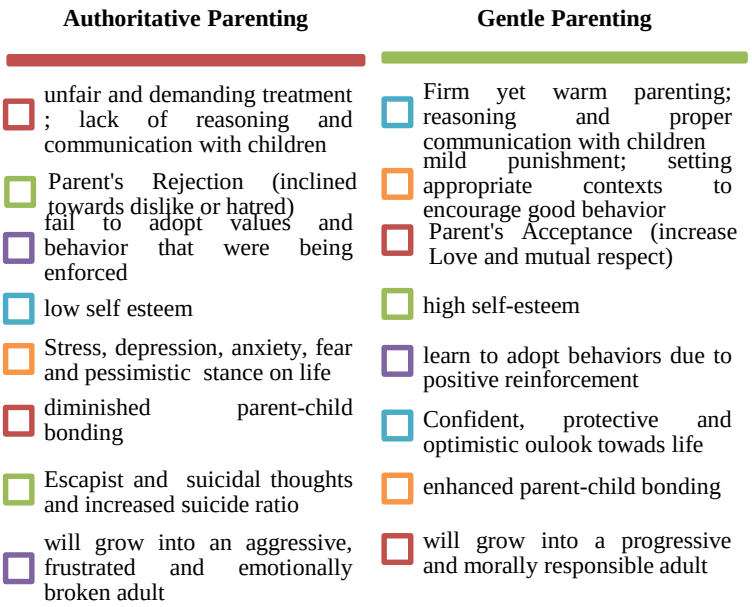
Authoritative Parenting
Gentle Parenting
unfair and demanding treatment ; lack of reasoning and communication with children
Parent's Rejection (inclined towards dislike or hatred)
fail to adopt values and behavior that were being enforced
low self esteem
Stress, depression, anxiety, fear and pessimistic stance on life
diminished parent-child bonding
Escapist and suicidal thoughts and increased suicide ratio
will grow into an aggressive, frustrated and emotionally broken adult
Firm yet warm parenting; reasoning and proper communication with children
mild punishment; setting appropriate contexts to encourage good behavior
Parent's Acceptance (increase Love and mutual respect)
high self-esteem
learn to adopt behaviors due to positive reinforcement
Confident, protective and optimistic oulook towads life
enhanced parent-child bonding
will grow into a progressive and morally responsible adult

**Figure 2.** Comparative Analysis of Emotional Regulation in Children with Opposing Parenting Techniques[62]

The above mentioned figure clearly depicts that gentle parenting is far more fruitful in upbringing children. This view is the gist of Ibn Miskawaih, al-Ghazālī and modern psychological approaches towards child rearing.

### 5.1. Closing Remarks

Upbring children in the best way and to instil moral values in them are the primordial aim of parents and mentors. Amidst modern-day challenges of multi-faceted nature a single approach alone cannot suffice and resolve parent's dilemma. By using tripartite framework, we have tried to blend eastern and western view point to provide the best possible model to raise kids. We have seen that Ibn Miskawaih leans towards moral education and Behavior psychology with his stress on habit, imitation and moderation; whereas, al-Ghazālī's perspective is inclined toward concerns regarding values, inner discipline and moral identity. Both of them together add a spiritual depth

[61]Yuzhu Wang, Meifang Wang, and Xiaopei Xing, "Parental Harsh Discipline and Child Emotion Regulation: The Moderating Role of Parental Warmth in China," *Children and Youth Services Review* 93 (October 2018): 283–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.07.035.

[62]The figure has been derived from multiple researches. For more details readers may refer to (Wang, Wang, and Xing, "Parental Harsh Discipline and Child Emotion Regulation: The Moderating Role of Parental Warmth in China," 283-90; Grusec, and Jacqueline J. Goodnow, "Impact of Parental Discipline Methods on the Child's Internalization of Values," 4-19; K. Sobita Devi, "Parental Disciplining and Children Behaviours: A Review," 20-25; Gershoff et al. "Parent Discipline Practices in an International Sample: Associations with Child Behaviors and Moderation by Perceived Normativeness," 487-502.

which is often missing in secular psychology. Together they offer a holistic approach to face modern-day challenges regarding disciplining Gen Z, Alpha and Beta; and raise them to be the moral and responsible individuals of the society.

Moreover, it is the responsibility of parents and teachers to guide children to behave appropriately without using physical and mental abuse. Parents should nurture a doable environment for their kids where they feel protected, loved and wanted. Instilling values and moral Behavior in a positive manner will produce positive outcomes along with enhanced self-esteem, boosted confidence and optimistic world-view towards life. Being dismissive towards children issues; lack of understanding them; and commanding values by force will likely induce negative outcomes. Although both Ibn Miskawaih and al-Ghazālī wrote a millennium ago, yet their ideas resonates with secular psychological insights that signifies the importance of social learning, habit formation and balanced parenting along with meaningful life, God's consciousness and humility.

In an era where consumerism, digital distraction and moral uncertainty prevail, their wisdom combined with western psychology remains strikingly contemporary and relevant. By integrating the trio in our tripartite framework, a balanced model has been articulated where faith meets reason; habit is combined with virtue; and freedom is combined with responsibility.

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